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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9312
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 8462
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SUBJECT: FIRST TRACK I DISCUSSION ON ASEAN HUMAN RIGHTS BODY

REF: JAKARTA 991

¶1. (SBU) The May 15-17 ASEAN Workshop on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (reftel) in Bali, Indonesia, was the first Track I discussion of human rights by ASEAN member country officials. According to various participants, it was a success in discussing ideas and generating recommendations on the shape of an ASEAN Human Rights Body (HRB). Participants generated recommendations that the Government of Indonesia (represented at the workshop by Dian Triansyah Djani, Director General for ASEAN Cooperation, Department of Foreign Affairs) will convey as a summary document to the 10-member high-level panel that will draft the terms of reference (TORs) for the HRB. (Note: The July 12-13 ASEAN Ministers Meeting (AMM) in Singapore will finalize and officially introduce the panel members. End Note.) ASEAN member government officials, human rights experts, and ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) officials attended the workshop. A representative from the Canadian Embassy in Jakarta (Canada sponsored the event) also attended the first day sessions on May 16; the May 17 session was closed to non-ASEAN attendees. An official with the rank of Deputy Director represented Burma's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¶2. (SBU) ASEC officials said the workshop was successful in generating ideas about how to structure a human rights body for ASEAN. Initially, some member countries were apprehensive about even generating ideas about what an ASEAN HRB would look like. However, the participants were able to allay these concerns by stating that the workshop was a place to generate ideas for consideration rather than make decisions. Along with the summary document of recommendations, the workshop participants attached as an appendix draft TORs of an "ASEAN Human Rights Commission" that an April 28-30 meeting in the Philippines of the ASEAN National Human Rights Institutions Forum finalized.

¶3. (SBU) According to one participant, it was remarkable that discussions reached a great level of detail about the monitoring role of an ASEAN HRB -- including specifics about witness protection, access to confidential government records, and the like. Unsurprisingly, the four countries with existing national human rights commissions (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines) -- with representatives in attendance -- were the most energetic and proactive participants during the workshop. Another attendee commented that at the close of the workshop, the chairperson noted that none of the participants had mentioned "Asian values" even once.

14. (U) For an electronic copy of the draft TORs of the "ASEAN Human Rights Commission", contact Machut Shishak at shishakma@state.gov or Aryani Manring at manringae@state.gov.

HUME